

Jan 31. 1936

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For the Magistrates & other Officers
in *Huntingtonshire*, who have been
concern'd in the Spoiling the Goods
of the Innocent, who meet together
in Obedience to the Requirings of
the Good Spirit of the Lord, to
Worship him in his own Way.

Countrymen, unto whose Consciences my Life and
Conversation, with many more of my Friends, hath
been manifested to have been peaceable, and seeking
the Good of all People, and our Assemblies to have been
peaceable, and our Meeting together to edifie one another in
that which is good: And now, what have you against us saving
the Law and Worship of our God? Unto the Light of Christ
Jesus in all your Consciences I do appeal for Justice herein.

It is not unknown unto you, how that I, with many more
of my Friends, have been deep Sufferers in our Estates under
Pretence of Virtue of a late Act *to prevent and suppress Sedi-
tious Conventions*; but wherein I and my Friends are guilty,
doth not yet appear farther then it is the Will of Men it shall
be so. Now Friends and People, I do acknowledge; it is and
hath been my Practice ever since I was convinced of the pre-
cious Truth as it is in Jesus, to meet with the People of God,
and to sit down and wait upon him in his Fear, and to worship
him in Spirit and in Truth, and to draw near unto him, from
whom I have often felt Spiritual Refreshments, unto whose
Honour and Glory my Soul ascribes the Praise forever and e-
vermore.

vermore. But now, as to that Act which you pretend to act by, 1st, It is entituled, *An Act to prevent and suppress Seditious Conventicles*; which I do deny being guilty of frequenting any Seditious Meeting; it is those Rude Drunken Informers, who have often disturbed our Peaceable Meetings, and therein shewn themselves Seditious and Violent against us, who were alwayes sound and known to be Peaceable in our publick Meeting places, until they have broke the Peace, and made a Disturbance: And it should have been the Magistrates place to have punished those Rude Informers, who have so often disturbed our Peaceable Meetings, who meet together for Good, and not for Evil. 2^{dly}, The Act saith, *Who under Pretence of Tender Conscience, have or may at their Meetings contrive Insurrections (as late Experience hath shewn)* Now I do appeal to God's Witness in your Consciences, whenever had you any such Experience of us? But I do affirm, that you have had large Experience to the contrary for Twenty Years and upwards, where our Meetings have been established by the Light and Power of the Lord Jesus. But if you say, *We know not but in time we may, and therefore we would prevent you*: Herein will not both Nature, ancient Laws and good Conscience witness against you? Who will punish a person or people who doth well, because you are jealous that in time to come he or they may do Evil? Besides, Doth not God's Witness in your Consciences witness for us, that our Principle leadeth to Good, and not to Evil; let God's Witnesses in your Consciences be judge in this and of other Matters, and then Righteous Judgment assuredly will be given. 3^{dly}, That Act forbids the number of Five or above, besides those of the Household: Now I say, if five or four, three or two, meet for Evil, they ought to be punished according to the Nature of the Evil acted: but if two, three, four, five or five hundred meet together for the Good and Edification one of another in the Lord, they ought to be encouraged, and the Magistrates ought to preserve them therein; and for this End pay we Tribute, that we might be preserved in Body and Estate, and live a peaceable, Godly and quiet Life, in all Honesty,

nelly under the Government, but if otherwise, we must suffer for our Obedience to God, it is our Principle patiently to suffer under them that are set over us, and so commit our Cause unto the Lord; and this was the Practice of Christ Jesus our Lord, and his faithful Followers, when he was in that Body prepared to do his Father's Will, and his faithful Followers after his Departure, when they were endued with Power from on high. And so I would that all our fellow Creatures, male and female, did rightly know us and our Principle, that so they might come and sit down with us, and receive an Earnest of that Inheritance and Riches which no Evil Instrument can take away, and a Place in that Habitation, which is Everlasting.

Friends & People, if we were but only Pretenders to worship God, we were then of all People most miserable, but Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, he hath given unto us, not only that Knowledge, that we can say it is the Truth, but Praises to his most holy Name, he hath also given us to feel, taste and handle of the Word of Life, whereby we know sensibly all things in this World to be of no Value, in Comparison of the Riches of his Love to our Souls, even to as many as walk before him with a perfect and upright Heart. Christ Jesus our Lord who was numbred amongst Transgressors, above Sixteen Hundred Years since, as you may read in the Scriptures of Truth, he set up this Worship in Spirit and in Truth, which we bear Testimony unto, and suffer for, when he testified the End of the Worship in the Mountain, and the Worship at Jerusalem, and said, *Not in this Mountain, nor at Jerusalem, but they that worship the Father must worship him in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* Friends and People, we were Strangers as well as others, but Christ Jesus the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls sought us out, and by the Arm of his Almighty Power hath brought us to be a People, who were in Dayes past not a People to God, but Strangers and Aliens, and wandering upon the barren Mountains and desolate Hills of divers Professions, seeking Rest, but found it not, until the compassionate Creator, who be-

holds the secrets of all Hearts, beheld us in our Blood, loaden with Sin and Iniquity, and had Compassion on us, and did reach forth a Hand of Help unto us; and by the Light of his Son Christ Jesus did shew unto us the Way in which we should walk, wherein we have and do find Rest to our weary panting Souls, praises to his most holy Name for evermore!

So Friends and People, there is great need of our Faithfulness in so weighty a Concern as this, wherein so great a treasure lieth of our Eternal Happiness by being faithful unto him that hath called us; for if we deny him before men, then will he deny us before his Father which is in Heaven, and whosoever loveth any thing more then him, will not be found worthy of him.

And now be it known unto you our Country Folks, that it is our Rights to enjoy our outward Estates, which the Lord hath lent unto us, and made us as Stewards of an ought you, where the Lord hath cast our Lots, but rather then violate the Law of God in our Consciences, we are contented to part with them for his Name and Testimony Sake; but what will you do in the Day of Account, or how will you appear before so dreadful a God, who will reward the Evil-doers with fore Vengeance? Oh People who have had any Hand in spoiling the Goods of the Innocent! Repent, Repent, yea I say seek a Place of Repentance before it be too late. It is the Earnest Desire of my Soul that every one of you our Persecutors might find a place of Repentance, that so your Iniquities might be blotted out, and not be your Ruin. So whilest the Spirit of the Lord strives with you or any of you, and shews unto you your Evil Deeds, turn you unto it, that by it you may come to be purged from that Guilt and Transgression which otherwise will be your sore Distress in the Day of Account, which will shortly overtake you.

I do justly complain of your cruel Proceedings and Actings against me and others, by Pretence of the said Act. In short, I have had Goods spoiled to the worth of near forty Pounds, and now at this time there are two Warrants issued out against me, one for fifty Shillings, the other for Ten Pounds Ten Shillings, and they that have been Witnesses against me,

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are men of the basest Sort, who for their Pains have had Part of the Spoils, or money that hath been made of the Goods distrained, for which they have thus sworn and informed. And is it not contrary to Law that a man's Oath should be taken, when it is for his own Mercenary Ends, in his own Cause? And is it not the Informers own Cause, when they have Part of the Money for their Swearing and Informing? whether true or false it hath been little notice taken of, but if two men will but swear to it, we must suffer, and they for their Injurious Work have a Reward: And is not this unreasonable to be encouraged? I leave it to your Judgments who are knowing in Law. At our late general Meeting at *Earish*, where we were peaceably met together, according to our usual manner, to wait upon and worship the Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth (for which I stand fined Ten Pounds Ten Shillings, upon the Oaths of these Informers or some of them, viz. *Stephen Perry of Cambridge, Thomas Gilby of Blunsham, John Pottal of Somersham*, who came into our peaceable Meeting in a very rude, distracted, outrageous manner, being so in Drink they could not give a sober Answer, nor some of them speak plain, having been several Hours in an Ale-house to fit themselves for that Service, yet these and such like Instruments, have and do serve to make sufficient Witnesses for the spoiling the Goods of the Innocent. Whether true or false they speak & swear to is not the Question, nor are we so much as heard Face to Face, which Priviledge Fellons and Murderers have in their Tryals, but if the Informers will swear it shall serve to send out Warrants to restrain our goods. Were it an Offence to be at a peaceable Meeting at *Earish*, yet they that were not there, were not Offenders for being there, as for Instance, *Thomas Cook of Earish* who was not there that Day, and yet a Warrant out to restrain and take his goods! was ever the like heard of in any professed Christian Nation, or is this the Spirit of Christ think you People that thus acteth in these men? unto the Just Witness of God in every Conscience, I do appeal for Justice.

Further you say it is made against such as meet under Colour of

Presence

Pretence of Exercise of Religion, in other manner then according to the Liturgy and Practice of the Church of England. Now I do deny that ours is but a Pretence, but I do confess it is in Reality and Truth to worship God that made me: And doth not your Liturgy allow and exhort, at all times and in all Places to pray, lifting up holy Hands to God, then I hope it is not a Transgression if we pray in a Barn, House or Yard or Backside. Your Liturgy hath many good Words and Exhortations in it, which if they were practised by the Hearers thereof, there would not have been that Spoil and Havock made upon the Goods of the Innocent, as hath been these six Years last past. Now according to the real Words of that Act, I do not understand that we are the People, neither ought we to suffer by it.

But if any say, *it was intended against us & all other Settaries, and so is left to the Justices to construe most largely and beneficially for the suppressing Conventicles.* Our peaceable Meetings are not Conventicles, nor ought in Justice to be suppressed; for no such Experience late or early have you ever had, but if you will construe it so, be it upon your Heads in the Day of Account, when the Just God shall reward every one according to his Deeds done in the Body.

And now come Persecutors of all Sorts, from the highest to the lowest, let us reason together a little, A little while and you and we must be gone unto our long Homes, and then what will the Glory of this World and the Riches of it avail us. Remember *Dives* who had his portion in this Life, and had not compassion on his Fellow-creature, although I do not read that he took away that which was *Lazarus's*, yet his Hard-heartedness was his Burden, when in the Flames, and then he would have had his five Brethren warned that they might not come into that Place of Torment, and would have had *Lazarus* sent from the dead to warn them, *But if they will not believe Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe though one rise from the dead* (it was answered him) Oh how this poor *Dives* pleaded, for then he was so desirous to have his Brethren warned that they might not come to be his
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Companions! But how many Warnings this Nation of *England* hath had, it is hard to Number, even by Witnesses, who have been raised from Death; which is in Sin, and from the Grave of Iniquity, to bear Testimony to the Everlasting Truth, as it is in Jesus, and for the turning of People from Satan's power to the Power of the Lord Jesus, the Light of the World, that by it People might come to know a being washed, purified and sanctified: And what hath been the Reward from the Rulers? These Witnesses have received Prisons, many till Death, others Whipt as Vagabonds, some stocked, sometimes others Stoned by the rude tumultuous People; yet he that sent them forth hath been with them, and supported them through all these Sufferings, and been a sufficient Reward unto them, even as in dayes past, and in Generations that are gone; he hath been a sufficient Support in all Tryals and Exercises which any hath met withal, as they have abode faithful to the Light of the Lord Jesus. O People, it is in vain to strive against the Lord; for he is stronger then you: therefore submit unto him, that he may break you, that a New Lump you may become; for, if he fall upon you, you will be ground to Powder. Therefore whilst you have Time, prize it; for the Time past none can call again, neither Time to come can any truly promise to themselves.

Law-Makers, did you intend this Act for a Snare for the Feet of the Innocent? God, that Judge of all Secrets, knows your Intents therein, and our Innocency.

Informers, did or do you intend or think to make your selves Rich by the Spoyle of the Innocent, who have no Helper in the Earth? A Curse will follow you, you Vagabonds.

Justices, so called, did and do you think to save your great Estates by giving out your Warrants to Distrain us, and take away ours, who had small Ones, and yet God's Blessings upon our honest Labours, if you would have let it alone with us? God hath, doth and will plead with you in secret.

Constables, Church-wardens, Overseers of the Poor, &c. who have had a hand in taking away and spoiling your Neighbours Goods, contrary to the Light of Christ Jesus in your

own Consciences, for fear of suffering your selves; will your so doing bring you Peace in your Latter-end? With the Light of Christ Jesus search your selves, and see how it stands with you; for you must give an Account hereof unto the great God, that made Heaven and Earth.

Covetous Earth worms, who have bought our Goods, which we have truly laboured for, at an under Value, sometimes three penny worth for one Penny; what do you think they will enrich and enlarge your Estates? No; they will be as a Moth in a Garment.

Persecutors with Tongue, and Speakers Evil of the Light which you could never comprehend, nor in your carnal wisdom never shall; what do you think to possess by killing the Right Heir? No, the Lord of the Vineyard will come and dispossess you; such shall be established in the lasting Possession, as will with Gladness of Heart yield unto him of his Fruits in due season: Praises be given unto the Lord, many can say of a Truth, *The Sun is risen that shall never set more, and it is in vain for the Night-Fowlers to spread their Nets*: And so, in that Habitation that God hath prepared me, where no Wicked Informer nor Instrument of Satan can come, I rest; who am a true Lover of Magistracy and Justice, and a Well-wisher to all People,

Feneystanton, the 15th }
Day of the 4th Moneth, }
commonly called June, }
1676.

Tobias Hardmeat.

THE END.

